

# SouthwestNOW

MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 2025



## The Spirit of Giving

2025 Holiday  
Shopping Guide

The Duncanville  
Women's Club crafts a  
charity bazaar

Featured Business:  
Hill City Church

In the Kitchen With  
Dr. Ashla Martin

Also inside:  
Scavenger Hunt



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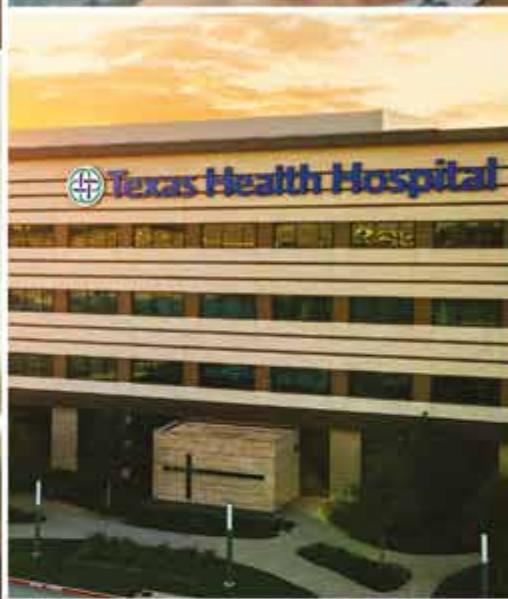
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Dr. Allala is a graduate of the Texas A&M School of Dentistry. "When I started there, it was still Baylor. My diploma has both names on it," she recalled. "I specialize in oral surgery, and we're really good at it. I'm nothing without my team. We do everything in dentistry. I like being well rounded. I enjoy being an overachiever, so I'm constantly taking continuing education, keeping up with all the

newest techniques and technology. I'm also a native Spanish speaker. I grew up speaking both languages. Our YouTube videos explaining procedures are available in both English and Spanish."

Dr. Allala is proud of the service they provide at Serenity Advanced Dentistry. "I think we give five-star service. And I know my staff is five-star. We know what works and what doesn't. I know it sounds corny, but this is my life's work. Most of my staff have been with me for years, at different locations around DFW, before I came to Cedar Hill. I met Mariela seven years ago, in Pleasant Grove. It was my first job out of school. Racine has been with me four years, and Jazmine three years, both in Red Oak. Our newest team member is Jessica. She found us three months ago when she emailed me looking for an opportunity to shadow a dentist."

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Dr. Cristina Allala

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

Christmas past ...

When I was in kindergarten, we went to a tree farm and cut a cedar tree. Turns out, I'm allergic to cedar. I had an asthma attack. I saw the doctor and got medicine, but it turned into pneumonia. My dad drove me to Methodist Hospital. The speedometer indicated over 100 mph. With what little breath I had, I begged him to slow down. He didn't. My hospital stay was only a few days, but it seemed a lot longer. The hospital staff filled a surgical glove with helium, drew a face on it and tied it to my bed. They named it Bobo. I was an undiagnosed ADHD 5-year-old. I'm sure they were glad to see me go!

While Mom stayed with me during my hospital time, my younger siblings stayed with Mom's aunt. My sister, ever the dramatic 3-year-old, told our aunt, "Oh! I just don't think we'll ever be together again!" Our aunt was flabbergasted.

I never returned to kindergarten. An artificial tree from the Joske's after-Christmas sale replaced live trees. But we spent all our Christmases together, until I moved to Taiwan in my 30s. I recently found Bobo, crumpled and brittle, in Mom's things, a reminder of that Christmas, and hope for ...

Adam Walker  
SouthwestNOW Editor  
adam.walker@nowmagazines.com  
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... Christmas present.

P.S. The publisher and staff of NOW Magazines would like to wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and the happiest of holiday seasons!

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BEFORE      AFTER

December 2025  
Volume 19, Issue 12

## ON THE COVER



Linda DeCorte and Edna Bolinger make the Christmas Charity Bazaar a success year after year.

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# The Spirit of Giving

— By Adam Walker



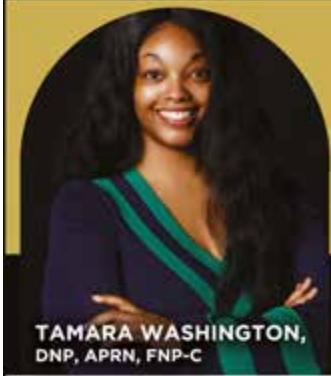
Edna Bolinger and Linda DeCorte are two of the many members of the Duncanville Women's Club who make their annual Christmas Charity Bazaar happen. They've been leading the effort to make this event happen for years. "We've been organizing the bazaar for eight years now," Linda explained. "Any of our other offices are for one three-year term, except the bazaar. They just keep saying, 'Oh, you two are good at it. Keep doing it!'"



The Duncanville Women's Club started in 1970 as the Duncanville Newcomers Club. Now, despite the name still indicating Duncanville, the club includes members from DeSoto, Cedar Hill, Dallas, Grand Prairie, Red Oak, Ovilla, Lancaster and surrounding communities. The bazaar has been through a few name changes as well. "It started out as the bake sale," Linda continued. "Then it changed to the bazaar. Last year, we added the word charity to emphasize why we're doing this. The money we raise goes to help fund a number of local charities."

Edna and Linda both came to be members of the Duncanville Women's Club by similar routes. "One of my friends asked me to come to one of the monthly luncheons 15 years ago," Edna said. "I did and enjoyed it. The purpose of the club is fellowship and fun. I realized right off that this is a fun group of ladies."

"I've been coming for 12 years, likewise, because someone invited me," Linda added. "And there's always



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something new. We have 138 members currently, and I know most of them. We go to movies and theater shows together. We play mahjong and golf and bridge. We go out drinking." At that, Edna leaned in and locked her lips, throwing the key away, before Linda continued. "We meet at the Duncanville Chamber of Commerce on the third Wednesday of each month for coffee and brunch. On the first Wednesday, we meet at St. Anne Episcopal Church in DeSoto. About 80 of us usually show up for that. We eat together and have our business meeting. Then we have a guest speaker."

"We have all kinds of speakers," Edna informed. "We had the herb lady, and the gentleman from the flight museum in Terrell. A police officer spoke to us about how to defend ourselves. One of our upcoming speakers will be presenting about Ladybird Johnson. Sometimes, we have book reviews. It's usually something informative."

The Christmas Charity Bazaar is the club's biggest event of the year. "By the time it's over, there are months of work involved. But we're really busy from

November 1st until the event happens," Edna said. "Just about all of us make something to sell at the bazaar, or to put in the grab bags or donate items for the auction."

"The charity aspect is something fairly new," Linda explained. "We started using the money we raised to support local charities. When the bazaar is over, we find out how much money we raised, and then we vote on which charities to support this year, and how much to give each one, based on where we think the needs are. We give to food pantries, women's shelters, the animal shelter, organizations helping the homeless or children in foster care. We've given to a lot of different organizations. We had about 100 to 115 people come to last year's bazaar. Some of the women who came decided to join the club."

The Christmas Charity Bazaar still has plenty of baked goods to offer, as well as a wine bar. There are grab bags filled with mystery gifts, a raffle and a silent auction for some of the pricier items donated. The bazaar typically features everything from

Christmas ornaments and decorations to household and kitchen goods to jewelry and even their famous "books and bucks." "Some of the books have money hidden inside," Edna revealed. "We also have some photographs of John Wayne this year. We try to make sure that it's nothing like a garage sale."

The grab bags are \$1 a bag and might contain things like coffee mugs, lotions or earrings. The silent auction has baked goods, crafts, antiques, jewelry and Christmas centerpieces. The baked goods store has items from \$5 to \$15. The raffle includes a lot of gift cards.

"Like in years past, the bazaar will be held at the First United Methodist Church in Cedar Hill. It's on December 3, this year, from 9:30-11:30 a.m.," Edna added. "And guests are welcome at the luncheon, as long as they reserve a spot. We always welcome more women to get involved." **NOW**

*Editor's Note: To reserve a spot at the luncheon, call Carolyn Wasco at (214) 690-1440.*

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## BusinessNOW

# Hill City Church

— By Adam Walker

### Hill City Church

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Hill City Church proclaims itself a “nondenominational, multiracial, multicultural, life-giving church, committed to loving and following Jesus together through small group life and serving our community.” They’re trying to live out that declaration.

Pastor Adam McCain, referred to by his staff as PA, is very intentional about being a diverse body of believers. “We strive to be a multiracial, multigenerational church. We come from different backgrounds, but we’re doing life together. We’re about 1/3 white, 1/3 Black and 1/3 Hispanic, but we also have Asian and other members of this body. It’s a beautiful expression, with the dynamics of our different backgrounds, doing life together through Christ. Social media uses algorithms to put you in an echo chamber. We want no algorithms. I want my children to grow up with people who are not like them. But if you don’t like people with messy stuff, this might not be the church for you!”

PA continued, “People say that when they walk in here, it feels like home, because they see people like them. That’s not accidental. Our worship pastor is from Pennsylvania. His

grandparents were Amish. He grew up with a particular style of worship. He's had to learn Gospel music and Spanish songs. We don't separate out into groups. We all worship together. Even our small groups are all blended.

"We believe that it is important for every believer to be a minister. In Sunday service, if you raise your hand, saying that you need prayer, whoever is near you will pray for you. Every Christian has in them the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead. To grow in God, we have to use our gifts to minister to each other. That's part of why we have over 100 small groups."

**"People say that when they walk in here, it feels like home, because they see people like them."**

"We believe in creating opportunities for people to use their gifts," Jami McCain, PA's wife, agreed. "We believe in peer leadership. That's why there are 23 teen leaders in the youth group."

"Our young people serve in every part of the ministry," PA emphasized. "They serve alongside our older people and the middle aged."

Hill City doesn't believe that church is a place for perfect people. "If you're lonely, even though you're in church, something is wrong," PA explained. "Church is a failure, if you're not in relationship with each other. We work to get people in relationship with other believers. You don't have to pretend to have it all together to be accepted. In our Redeemed series, members talk about what they have been saved from. Everyone has brokenness. This is a safe place to grow and change. The flesh is messy and ugly, and if we walk together, some of your messy gets on me. But we can grow and change together. Healthy things grow. I believe that's how church is supposed to be."

If you're looking for a church to call home, Adam and Jami McCain, and the rest of the team at Hill City Church invite you to come see if they can be that home for you. Their Christmas services are on December 21, at 9:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m. and noon in Cedar Hill and 10:30 a.m. in Mansfield. **NOW**

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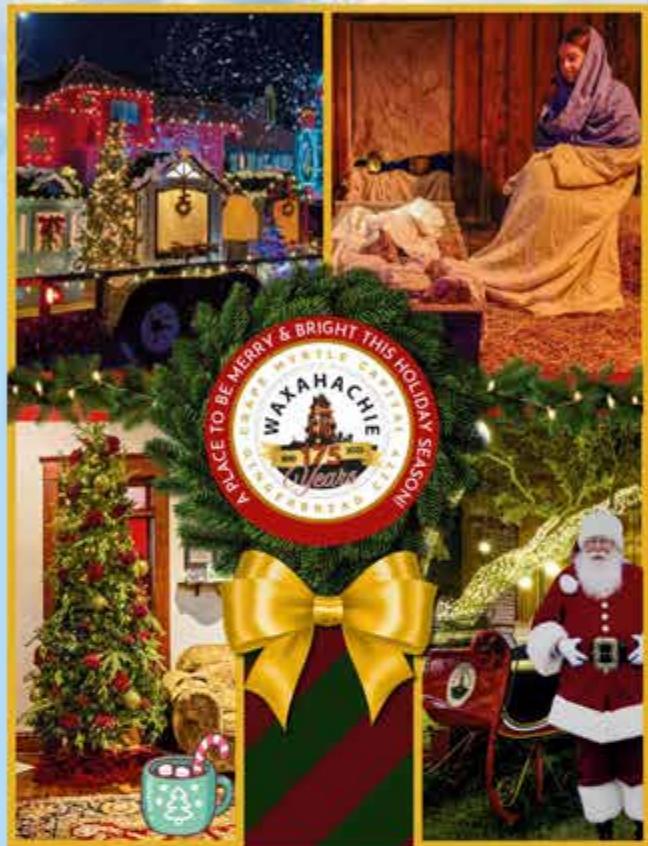
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# 2025 Holiday Shopping Guide

A quick look at the gift items and discounts available locally.



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A quick look at the gift items and discounts available locally.

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## Zoomed In: Abigail, Charles and George Brown

By Adam Walker

Abigail Brown brought her sons, Charles and George, to the Duncanville Public Library one recent afternoon. "We're just here getting some educational books for George. He loves educational books. But he doesn't like getting his picture made," she informed as George escaped to the other side of the children's room, where all the toys and activity areas suddenly became more interesting than books at the mention of pictures.

Meanwhile, younger brother Charles tried out his computer skills on one of the screens, getting a head start on the other future entrepreneurs in the pre-K set. Big brother George, agreed to come back for the photo, after some gentle coaxing from his mom, but got his revenge with some stealthily flashed rabbit ears placed on his younger sibling.



Felecia Whitfield inspires creativity at Collegiate Prep.



The DeSoto Fire Department teaches the community about fire safety.



Mayor Contreras and the city of Duncanville welcome a delegation from their sister city, Monasterolo di Savigliano, Italy.

NOW



Firefighter/EMT-P Armando Martinez shows Eli Negron and Walker Davidson the inside of an ambulance at First Methodist School.



State Farm Agent Daisy Cano and her team celebrate their grand opening in Cedar Hill.



DeSoto ISD celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month.



The Traphene Hickman Library hosts a murder mystery dinner.

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# CookingNOW IN THE KITCHEN WITH DR. ASHLA MARTIN

— By Adam Walker



Cooking has always been more than food for Dr. Ashla Martin. It is a way for her to honor her Louisiana roots. “Just like dentistry, cooking is about nurturing and nourishing. At the stove, I get to celebrate the heart and soul through flavor,” she said.

“In Louisiana kitchens, the Holy Trinity — onion, celery and bell pepper — is the foundation of almost every great dish. It’s more than just ingredients,” she said. “It’s a symbol of tradition, family and the soulful way we cook with love. For me, the Trinity also reminds me of my faith, adding a spiritual layer to every recipe I prepare. Cooking with the Trinity feels like weaving together my roots, my heart and my joy in serving others.”

Ashla never studied cooking formally, but she grew up in Louisiana kitchens surrounded by family who taught her to season with both spice and love. “My mom and grandmother were my biggest influences, and over the years, I’ve created my own healthy spins on their classic recipes and have an extensive collection of cookbooks!” **NOW**

## Cheesecake Bars *A Southern classic with a sweet twist*

**1 box yellow cake mix**  
**1 stick unsalted butter, melted**  
**3 large eggs (divided use)**  
**8 oz. cream cheese, softened**  
**1 tsp. vanilla extract**  
**3 1/2 cups powdered sugar**  
**1/2 cup pecans, chopped (optional)**

1. Preheat the oven to 325 F.
2. Grease a 9x13-inch baking pan.
3. In a bowl, combine the cake mix, butter

and 1 egg. Stir until a soft dough forms. Press evenly into the bottom of the pan. **4.** In a separate bowl, beat the cream cheese until smooth. Add the remaining eggs and vanilla. Slowly blend in powdered sugar until silky and fluffy. Fold in the pecans. Pour over the crust, smoothing the top gently. **5.** Bake 40-45 minutes, until edges are lightly golden, and the center jiggles just a little. **6.** Cool completely before cutting into bars.

## Homemade Creole Seasoning *The spice blend that brings Louisiana to life*

**2 Tbsp. paprika**  
**1 Tbsp. garlic powder**  
**1 Tbsp. onion powder**  
**1 Tbsp. dried oregano**  
**1 Tbsp. dried basil**  
**1 tsp. dried thyme**  
**1 tsp. cayenne pepper, or to taste**  
**1 tsp. black pepper**  
**1 tsp. white pepper**  
**1 tsp. salt**

1. Mix all the ingredients in a small bowl until evenly blended.
2. Store in an airtight container for up to 6 months.
3. Use as a seasoning base for shrimp, gumbo, jambalaya, roasted veggies or anything that needs a little Louisiana soul!

## Creole Shrimp Stuffed Bell Peppers

*A Louisiana classic with a healthy twist*

**1 Tbsp. olive oil**  
**1 small onion, finely chopped**  
**1 stalk celery, chopped**  
**1 small green bell pepper, chopped**  
**1 lb. chicken Andouille sausage, thinly sliced**  
**1 clove garlic, minced**  
**1 Tbsp. fresh parsley, chopped**  
**1 Tbsp. Creole seasoning (see recipe in this article) or Tony Chachere’s Creole Seasoning**  
**1 lb. shrimp**  
**3 cups cooked brown rice**  
**6 large bell peppers, tops cut off and seeded**  
**8 oz. shredded cheese**  
**Paprika, for garnish**

1. Preheat the oven to 325 F.
2. Heat the oil in a large pot over low heat. Add the onions, celery and bell peppers; sauté for 5 minutes. Add the Andouille. Stir in the garlic; sauté for an additional 2 minutes. Season with parsley and Creole seasoning.
3. Add the shrimp; cook for 2 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in the cooked rice.
4. Stuff each bell pepper; sprinkle lightly with cheese. Place in an ungreased baking dish. Bake for 1 hour. Sprinkle with paprika before serving.



## Tips While Caring for Your Loved Ones During the Holidays:

- Modify the holiday tradition to suit your loved one's routine.
- Schedule events during their best time of day to avoid "sundowning."
- Always have a "Plan B" in case things get overwhelming.

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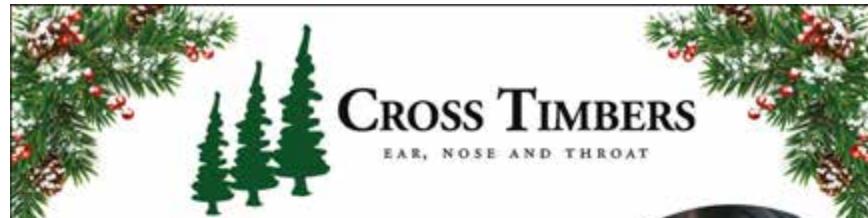
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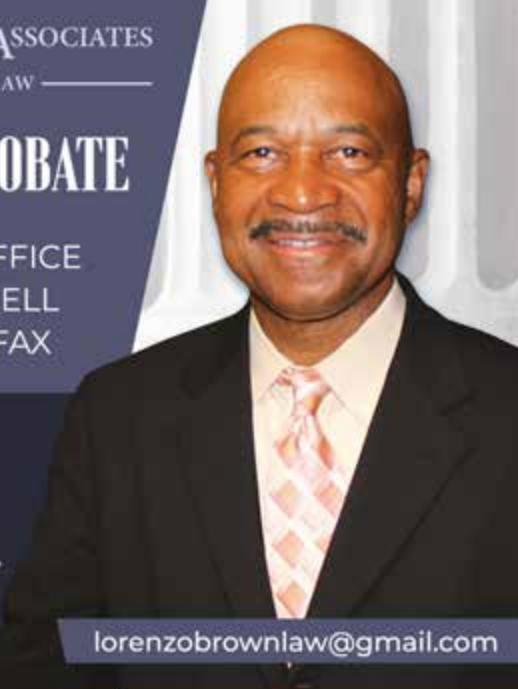




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# Merry CHRISTMAS

Some events may have been cancelled or rescheduled while we were at press.  
Check with individual organizations or your city or Chamber websites to verify dates and times.

# DECEMBER

**12/4**

**Holiday on the Hill:**

Tree lighting, photos with Santa, kids' activities. Free. 5:30-8:30 p.m., Historic Downtown, 600 Cedar Hill Dr., Cedar Hill.

**12/5**

**Holiday Lights in the Park:**

Tree lighting ceremony, drone light show, vendor booths, etc. Free. 5:00-9:00 p.m., 100 James Collins Blvd., Duncanville.

**12/6**

**Christmas Carols in the Park & Winter Bazaar:**

Featuring Lady S. and Walter Harper, local craft vendors,

music and food vendors. 6:00 p.m., 100 James Collins Blvd., Duncanville. (972) 780-5070.

**12/7**

**Hometown Holiday Christmas Parade & Tree Lighting:**

Free. Parade: 5:30 p.m. (From Wintergreen down Hampton Rd. to DeSoto Town Center); tree lighting: 7:00 p.m., DeSoto Town Center, 207 E. Pleasant Run Rd., DeSoto.

**Christmas Carol Sing-Along:**

Free. 5:30 p.m., Trinity United Methodist Church, 1302 S. Clark Rd., Duncanville.

**12/8**

**Master's Voice Concert:**

Focus on the Reason for the Season. 7:00-9:30 p.m., First Christian Church, 203 S. Main St., Duncanville.

**12/9**

**Teen Tuesdays**

**DIY Winter Wreaths:**

(Ages 13-18) Make holiday wreaths. While supplies last: 5:30-7:00 p.m., DeSoto Public Library, 211 E. Pleasant Run Rd.

**12/13**

**Christmas on the Farm:**

Learn about Christmas traditions throughout history. Free with park admission. \$7/person; children 12 and under enter free. 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Penn Farm,

Cedar Hill State Park, 1570 W. FM 1382, Cedar Hill.

**12/18**

**Christmas Promise Gala:**

Black-tie event. Vendor networking: 4:00-6:00 p.m.; gala dinner: 7:00-10:00 p.m. Benefits BRIDGES for Inclusion & Diversity Empowerment, Inc. 7:00-10:00 p.m., Artis Event Center, 160 Seahawk Dr., DeSoto. For pricing, visit <https://stayhappening.com/e/the-christmas-promise-gala-E118SAGKOYT2O>.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to [adam.walker@nowmagazines.com](mailto:adam.walker@nowmagazines.com).



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